



**Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences**

**Optimisation of PC12 Cell-based *In Vitro* Stroke Model for Screening of  
Potential Neuroprotective Agents**

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Optimisation of PC12 Cell-based *In Vitro* Stroke Model for Screening of  
Potential Neuroprotective Agents

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In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work. All sources of information which were used as references to compose this thesis have been acknowledged within the text. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

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## ABSTRACT

Stroke is one of the commonest causes of death and disability worldwide. To date, no neuroprotective agent is approved clinically for treatment of acute ischaemic stroke. PC12 cell-based *in vitro* stroke model has been used widely to screen for neuroprotective agents. The most common approach is to differentiate PC12 cells into a neuronal phenotype and subject the differentiated cells to oxygen glucose deprivation (OGD) to simulate an ischaemic stroke. However, there are increasing reports showing certain PC12 cell variants either poorly or cannot differentiate into neuron-like cells. Additionally, optimisation studies for cell culture media and adhesive substrate for commonly-used PC12 variants are limited. This study aimed to optimise cell culture conditions of three commonly-used PC12 cell variants and test their response to nerve growth factor (NGF)-induced differentiation. PC12 cells (Riken cell bank), PC12 Adh cells and PC12 Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) cells were studied. Optimisation of cell culture media and adhesive substrates were done by comparing cell morphology in different media and substrates. Adaptation of the three PC12 cell variants to a serum-free supplemented media was necessary because drug intervention studies need to be done in the absence of serum to avoid confounding effects. Comparison of the NGF-induced differentiation for the three PC12 cell variants was done by counting the percentage of neurite-bearing cells. The PC12 variant with the highest response to NGF underwent studies to optimise its duration of OGD. Differentiated-cells were subjected to different durations of OGD followed by measurement of cell viability and enzyme activity in the execution phase of apoptosis (caspase 3 and 7) to determine the optimal duration of OGD for *in vitro* stroke model. The *in vitro* model was validated by treating the OGD-treated cells with a known neuroprotectant, 8-hydroxy-2-(di-n-propylamino)tetralin (8-OH-DPAT) for

24 hours. The optimal culture media for PC12 cells (Riken) and NS-1 cells was found to be DMEM high glucose. Collagen IV was the best substrate for PC12 cells (Riken) and NS-1 cells. PC12 Adh cells showed no preference for media or substrates. Both NS-1 cells and PC12 cells (Riken) were successfully adapted to serum-free supplemented media. However, PC12 Adh cells failed to grow in a serum-free supplemented media. NS-1 cells gave the highest NGF-induced differentiation ( $72.7 \pm 9.1\%$ ) followed by PC12 cells (Riken,  $36.0 \pm 5.6\%$ ) and PC12 Adh cells ( $6.9 \pm 0.8\%$ ). NS-1 cells achieved optimal differentiation after three days of 150 ng/mL NGF treatment. The optimal duration of OGD to induce cell injury was three hours. Treatment with 8-OH-DPAT on NGF-differentiated NS-1 cells after three hours of OGD showed a significant reduction in apoptosis ( $p < 0.01$ , One-way ANOVA followed by post hoc Tukey's test). In conclusion, we have shown that each PC12 variant has differing requirements for media and adhesive substrates. NS-1 cells were the optimal PC12 cell variant for an *in vitro* stroke model due to its high level of NGF-induced differentiation. DMEM high glucose was the optimal media and collagen IV was the best substrate for NS-1 cells. We also provide the first report that 8-OH-DPAT is neuroprotective in NS-1 cells. We conclude that we have optimised and set up an *in vitro* stroke model to screen for potential neuroprotective agents.

**Keywords:** Stroke, PC12 cell, adhesive substrate, NGF-differentiation, oxygen deprivation assay, apoptosis assay, neuroprotective agents.

## ***Pengoptimuman Model Strok In Vitro berasaskan Sel PC12 untuk Penyaringan Agen Neuroprotektif yang Berpotensi***

### ***ABSTRAK***

*Penyakit Strok adalah salah satu penyebab utama kematian dan kecacatan di seluruh tetapi masih tiada agen neuroprotektif diluluskan untuk rawatan strok iskemia. Model strok in vitro berasaskan sel PC12 telah digunakan secara meluas untuk penyaringan agen-agen neuroprotektif. Pendekatan yang paling lazim digunakan adalah membezakan sel PC12 kepada fenotip neuron dan mendedahkan sel tersebut kepada keadaan kekurangan glukosa dan oksigen (OGD) untuk mensimulasikan strok iskemia. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat peningkatan laporan yang menunjukkan varian sel PC12 tertentu yang tidak dapat atau kurang berupaya untuk berbeza kepada sel seperti neuron. Kajian pengoptimuman untuk media kultur sel dan substrat perekat untuk varian PC12 yang lazim digunakan adalah terhad. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengoptimumkan keadaan kultur sel untuk tiga varian sel PC12 dan menguji tindak balas mereka terhadap pembezaan dengan faktor pertumbuhan saraf (NGF). PC12 (bank sel Riken), PC12 Adh dan PC12 Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) telah dikaji. Pengoptimuman media kultur sel dan substrat pelekak dilakukan dengan membandingkan morfologi tiga varian sel dalam media dan substrat pelekak yang berbeza. Penyesuaian varian sel tiga PC12 ke media tambahan tanpa serum adalah perlu kerana kajian ubat baru perlu dilakukan tanpa serum untuk mengelakkan kesan yang mengelirukan. Perbandingan tindak balas kepada pembezaan yang disebabkan oleh NGF untuk tiga varian sel telah dilakukan dengan mengira peratusan sel yang mengandungi neurit. Varian sel yang menunjukkan tindak balas tertinggi kepada NGF digunakan untuk mengoptimumkan tempoh OGD. Sel tersebut tertakluk kepada tempoh OGD yang berlainan dan diikuti dengan pengukuran daya aktif sel dan aktiviti enzim dalam fasa pelaksanaan apoptosis (caspase 3 dan 7) untuk menentukan tempoh optimum OGD. Model*

strok *in vitro* disahkan dengan merawat sel yang telah dcedera oleh OGD dengan menggunakan agen neuroprotektif yang dikenali sebagai 8-hydroxy-2-(di-n-propylamino) tetralin (8-OH-DPAT) selama 24 jam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan media kultur optimum untuk PC12 (Riken) dan NS-1 adalah DMEM tinggi gula. Kolagen IV adalah substrat terbaik untuk PC12 (Riken) dan NS-1. PC12 Adh tidak menunjukkan keutamaan dalam mana-mana media atau substrat. NS-1 dan PC12 (Riken) berjaya disesuaikan dengan media tambahan tanpa serum dan dapat hidup di media tersebut. Walau bagaimanapun, PC12 Adh gagal berkembang dalam media tambahan tanpa serum. NS-1 menghasilkan pembezaan yang disebabkan oleh NGF ( $72.7 \pm 9.1\%$ ) yang tertinggi diikuti oleh PC12 (Riken,  $36.0 \pm 5.6\%$ ) dan PC12 Adh ( $6.9 \pm 0.8\%$ ). Sel NS-1 mencapai pembezaan optimum selepas tiga hari rawatan 150 ng/mL NGF. Tempoh optimum OGD untuk merangsang kecederaan sel adalah tiga jam. Rawatan dengan 8-OH-DPAT pada sel NS-1 yang telah dibezakan selepas tiga jam OGD menunjukkan pengurangan apoptosis yang signifikan ( $p < 0.01$ ) (satu arah ANOVA diikuti oleh ujian Tuki post hoc). Kesimpulannya, kami telah menunjukkan bahawa setiap varian PC12 mempunyai keperluan berbeza untuk media dan substrat pelekat. Kami melaporkan bahawa 8-OH-DPAT adalah neuroprotektif dalam NS-1 dengan kali pertama. NS-1 adalah varian sel PC12 yang optimum untuk model strok *in vitro* kerana mempunyai tahap perbezaan oleh faktor NGF yang paling tinggi berbanding dengan dua varian PC12 yang lain. DMEM tinggi gula adalah media optimum dan kolagen IV adalah substrat terbaik untuk NS-1. NS-1 yang didedahkan kepada tiga jam OGD menyerupai strok iskemia. Kesimpulannya, kami telah mengoptimumkan dan menubuhkan model strok *in vitro* untuk menyaring agen-agen neuroprotektif yang berpotensi.

**Kata kunci:** Strok, sel PC12, substrak pelekat, pembezaan dengan faktor pertumbuhan saraf, kekurangan glukosa dan oksigen, apoptosis, agen-agen neuroprotektif



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| <b>DECLARATION</b> .....  | i    |
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....  | ii   |
| <b>ABSTRACT</b> .....   | iii  |
| <b>LIST OF TABLE</b> .....  | xv   |
| <b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....  | xvi  |
| <b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....                                    | xix  |
| <b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....            | 1    |
| 1.1 Stroke.....   | 1    |
| 1.1.1 Pathogenesis of Stroke .....                                    | 1    |
| 1.1.2 Current Stroke Treatment and the Future Trend .....             | 3    |
| 1.2 Neuroprotective Drug Discovery: <i>In Vitro</i> Stroke Model..... | 5    |
| 1.3 Tumor-derived PC12 Cell Line.....                                 | 8    |
| 1.4 Cell Culture Media.....   | 12   |
| 1.5 Serum Free Media.....   | 13   |
| 1.6 Cell Culture Adhesive Substrate.....                              | 14   |
| 1.7 Nerve Growth Factor-induced Differentiation.....                  | 15   |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1.8 Oxygen-Glucose Deprivation/Reperfusion (OGD/R).....  | 16        |
| 1.9 Apoptosis.....   | 17        |
| 1.10 Validation of the <i>In Vitro</i> Stroke Model.....   | 19        |
| 1.11 Hypothesis and Objectives.....  | 21        |
| <b>CHAPTER 2: MATERIAL AND METHODS .....</b>   | <b>22</b> |
| 2.1 PC12 Cell Culture: PC12 Adh Cells, PC12 Cells (Riken) and Neuroscreen-1<br>(NS-1) Cells.....     | 22        |
| 2.1.1 PC12 Adh Cell Culture .....  | 22        |
| 2.1.2 PC12 cells (Riken) Cell Culture .....  | 23        |
| 2.1.3 Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) Cell Culture .....  | 23        |
| 2.2 Optimisation of Cell Culture Media for Three PC12 Cell Variants.....                             | 24        |
| 2.2.1 Adaptation of PC12 Cells to Different Media .....  | 24        |
| 2.2.1.1 PC12 Adh Cells .....   | 24        |
| 2.2.1.2 PC12 Cells (Riken).....  | 25        |
| 2.2.1.3 Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) Cells .....   | 25        |
| 2.2.2 Comparison of Cell Morphology of PC12 Cells in Different Media.....                            | 26        |
| 2.3 Optimisation of Adhesive Substrate of 3 PC12 Cell Variants.....                                  | 26        |
| 2.3.1 Coating Protocol of Collagen I, Collagen IV, Poly-D-lysine, Poly-L-<br>lysine and Laminin..... | 26        |
| 2.3.1.1 Collagen I.....  | 26        |

|         |   |    |
|---------|---|----|
| 2.3.1.2 | Collagen IV.....  | 27 |
| 2.3.1.3 | Poly-D-lysine.....  | 27 |
| 2.3.1.4 | Poly-L-lysine.....  | 28 |
| 2.3.1.5 | Laminin.....  | 28 |
| 2.3.2   | Comparison of Cell Morphology of Three PC12 Cell Variants in<br>Different Adhesive Substrates ..... | 29 |
| 2.4     | Serum-Free Medium.....  | 30 |
| 2.4.1   | Formulation of Serum-free Supplemented Media .....  | 30 |
| 2.4.2   | Preparation of 6 Supplements .....  | 31 |
| 2.4.2.1 | Insulin.....  | 31 |
| 2.4.2.2 | Apo-transferrin .....   | 31 |
| 2.4.2.3 | Albumin.....  | 32 |
| 2.4.2.4 | Ethanolamine.....   | 32 |
| 2.4.2.5 | $\beta$ -mercaptoethanol .....  | 33 |
| 2.4.2.6 | Sodium Selenite.....  | 33 |
| 2.4.3   | Summary of a 100 mL DMEM High Glucose/ F12K Serum-free<br>Medium with Supplements .....             | 33 |
| 2.4.4   | Adaptation to Serum-free Supplemented Media.....  | 34 |
| 2.4.4.1 | PC12 Adh Cells .....  | 34 |
| 2.4.4.2 | PC12 Cells (Riken).....   | 35 |
| 2.4.4.3 | Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) Cells .....  | 35 |
| 2.5     | Nerve Growth Factor (NGF)-induced Differentiation of Three PC12 Cell<br>Variants.....               | 36 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 2.5.1 Nerve Growth Factor (NGF) Reconstitution and Storage .....                                       | 36 |
| 2.5.2 PC12 Adh Cell Differentiation .....  | 36 |
| 2.5.3 PC12 Cells (Riken) Cell Differentiation.....   | 37 |
| 2.5.4 Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) Cell Differentiation.....   | 37 |
| 2.5.5 Neurite Scoring .....  | 38 |
| 2.5.6 Comparison of Percentage of Neurite-bearing Cells .....  | 39 |
| 2.6 Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD).....  | 39 |
| 2.6.1 Removal of Glucose.....  | 39 |
| 2.6.2 Removal of Oxygen .....  | 39 |
| 2.6.3 Test Procedure of BD-BioBag® .....   | 40 |
| 2.7 Optimisation of Duration of Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD) using Cell Viability (MTT Assay)..... | 41 |
| 2.7.1 MTT Reagent Preparation.....   | 41 |
| 2.7.2 Procedure of Optimisation of Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD) using MTT Assay.....               | 42 |
| 2.7.2.1 96-well Plate Coating .....  | 42 |
| 2.7.2.2 Cell Seeding.....  | 42 |
| 2.7.2.3 Induction of Cell Differentiation with Nerve Growth Factor (NGF). .....                        | 43 |
| 2.7.2.4 Induction of Cell Injury by Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD).....                              | 43 |
| 2.7.2.5 Measurement of Cell Viability using MTT Assay .....  | 43 |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 2.8 Optimisation of Duration of Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD) using Apoptosis Assay (Caspase 3/7 Assay).....                                     | 44        |
| 2.8.1 Procedure of Optimisation of Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD) using Caspase 3/7 Assay .....   | 44        |
| 2.8.1.1 Measurement of Apoptosis using Caspase 3/7 Assay .....  | 45        |
| 2.9 Validation of the <i>In Vitro</i> Stroke Model by Testing the Neuroprotective Effect of 8-hydroxy-2(di-n-propylamino) tetralin (8-OH-DPAT)..... | 46        |
| 2.9.1 Procedure of Validation <i>In Vitro</i> Stroke Model.....   | 46        |
| 2.9.1.1 Reperfusion in Normal Culture Condition .....   | 47        |
| 2.9.1.2 Treatment with 8-OH-DPAT and WAY 100635 .....   | 47        |
| 2.9.1.3 Measurement of Apoptosis using Caspase-3/7 Assay.....   | 48        |
| 2.10 Statistical Analysis.....  | 48        |
| 2.11 Summary of Materials and Methods.....  | 49        |
| <b>CHAPTER 3: RESULT .....</b>  | <b>50</b> |
| 3.1 Optimisation of Cell Culture Media of Three PC12 Variants by Comparing Cell Morphology.....   | 50        |
| 3.1.1 PC12 Adh Cells.....   | 50        |
| 3.1.2 PC12 Cells (Riken) .....  | 50        |
| 3.1.3 Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) Cells.....   | 51        |
| 3.2 Optimisation of Cell Adhesive Substrate for Three PC12 Variants by Comparing Cell Morphology.....   | 55        |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 3.2.1 Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) Cells.....  | 55 |
| 3.2.2 PC12 Cells (Riken) .....   | 55 |
| 3.2.3 PC12 Adh Cells.....  | 56 |
| 3.3 Adaptation to Serum-free Supplemented Media for Three Cell Variants.....   | 63 |
| 3.3.1 PC12 Adh Cells.....  | 63 |
| 3.3.2 PC12 Cells (Riken) .....   | 63 |
| 3.3.3 Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) Cells.....  | 64 |
| 3.4 Summary of Optimisation of Cell Culture Conditions (Media and Adhesive<br>Substrates) and Growth in Serum-free Supplemented Media..... | 65 |
| 3.5 Comparison of the Dose Response to NGF in Three PC12 Variants.....   | 66 |
| 3.5.1 PC12 Adh Cells.....  | 66 |
| 3.5.2 PC12 Cells (Riken) .....   | 68 |
| 3.5.3 Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) Cells.....  | 70 |
| 3.6 Comparison of Three Cell Variants and Selection of the Most Suitable<br>Cell Variant for <i>In Vitro</i> Model.....                    | 72 |
| 3.7 Optimisation of Nerve Growth Factor-induced Differentiation of<br>Neuroscreen-1 (NS-1) Cells.....                                      | 74 |
| 3.8 Optimisation of Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD) Protocol and Duration<br>of OGD to Induce Cell Injury.....                            | 77 |
| 3.8.1 Optimisation of Duration of Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD) using<br>Cell Viability Assay (MTT assay) .....                         | 77 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 3.8.2 Optimisation of Duration of Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD) using Apoptosis Assay (Caspase 3/7 Assay) .....  | 78 |
| 3.9 Optimisation of Duration of Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD) for <i>In Vitro</i> Stroke Model.....  | 79 |
| 3.10 Validation of the <i>In Vitro</i> Stroke Model using the Neuroprotectant 8-hydroxy-2(di-n-propylamino) tetralin (8-OH-DPAT).....                         | 80 |
| <b>CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION</b> .....  | 81 |
| 4.1 Comparison and Selection of Suitable Culture Media of Three Cell Variants.....  | 81 |
| 4.2 Serum-free Supplemented Media.....  | 83 |
| 4.3 Comparison and Selection of Most Suitable Adhesive Substrates of 3 Cell Variants.....   | 85 |
| 4.4 Comparison of Nerve Growth Factor (NGF)-induced Differentiation Response of Three PC12 Cell Variants.....   | 87 |
| 4.5 Optimisation of Oxygen Glucose Deprivation (OGD) Duration to Induce Cell Injury.....  | 89 |
| 4.6 Validation of the <i>In Vitro</i> Ischaemic Stroke Model by Testing the Neuroprotective Effect of 8-hydroxy-2(di-n-propylamino) tetralin (8-OH-DPAT)..... | 90 |
| <b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION</b> .....  | 92 |
| <b>REFERENCES</b> .....   | 94 |

|                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| <b>APPENDICES.....</b> | <b>112</b> |
|------------------------|------------|



## LIST OF TABLE

|           |  | Page |
|-----------|--|------|
| Table 2.1 | Summary of the content of a 100mL DMEM high glucose serum-free media with supplement   | 34   |
| Table 3.1 | Summary of optimisation of cell culture conditions (media and adhesive substrates) and growth in serum-free supplemented media | 65   |
| Table 3.2 | Mean $\pm$ SD value (day 3 and day 4) and unpaired t-test p value for all concentrations of NGF.                               | 75   |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|  | <b>Page</b> |
|--|-------------|
| Figure 1.1      Microscopic images of PC12 cells in the absence of NGF<br>and in the presence of NGF for 14 days.  | 11          |
| Figure 1.2      Microscopic images of clonal PC12 cell variants with flattened<br>morphology: compact flat and extended flat   | 12          |
| Figure 1.3      Possible mechanisms of 5HT1A receptor-mediated inhibition of<br>caspase-3  | 20          |
| Figure 2.1      Illustration of 6-well plate coated with different adhesive<br>substrates.   | 30          |
| Figure 2.2      Workflow diagram of methods in setting up a PC12 cell-based<br><i>in vitro</i> stroke model.   | 49          |
| Figure 3.1      Microscopic images of PC12 Adh cells at 100x magnification in<br>different media.  | 52          |
| Figure 3.2      Microscopic images of PC12 cells (Riken) at 100x magnification in<br>different media.  | 53          |
| Figure 3.3      Microscopic images of NS-1 cells at 200x magnification in<br>different media.  | 54          |
| Figure 3.4      Microscopic images of NS-1 cells at 200x magnification in different<br>adhesive substrates in DMEM high glucose 17.5% on day 1 after<br>seeding.               | 58          |
| Figure 3.5      Microscopic images of PC12 cells (Riken) at 200x magnification in<br>different adhesive substrates in DMEM high glucose 17.5% serum on<br>day 1 after seeding. | 59          |

|             |   |    |
|-------------|---|----|
| Figure 3.6  | Microscopic images of PC12 cells (Riken) at 200x magnification in different adhesive substrates in serum-free supplemented DMEM on day 1 after seeding.           | 60 |
| Figure 3.7  | Microscopic images of PC12 Adh cells at 100x magnification in different adhesive substrates in F-12K 17.5% serum on day 1 after seeding.                          | 61 |
| Figure 3.8  | Microscopic images of PC12 Adh cells at 100x magnification in different adhesive substrates in serum-free supplemented F12-K on day 1 after seeding.              | 62 |
| Figure 3.9  | Microscopic images (200x) of NS-1 cells growing on collagen IV-coated flask in DMEM high glucose 17.5% serum and DMEM high glucose serum-free supplemented media. | 64 |
| Figure 3.10 | Microscopic images (100x) of neurite outgrowth of PC12 Adh cells treated with varying concentrations of NGF after 4 days of differentiation.                      | 67 |
| Figure 3.11 | Percentage of neurite-bearing cells of PC12 Adh cells in different concentrations of NGF (ng/mL) after 4 days of differentiation.                                 | 67 |
| Figure 3.12 | Microscopic images (200x) of neurite outgrowth of PC12 cells (Riken) treated with varying concentrations of NGF after 4 days of differentiation.                  | 69 |
| Figure 3.13 | Percentage of neurite-bearing cells of PC12 (Riken) in different concentration of NGF (ng/mL) after 4 days of differentiation.                                    | 69 |
| Figure 3.14 | Microscopic images (200x) of neurite outgrowth of NS-1 cells treated with varying concentrations of NGF after 4 days of   |    |

|             |  |    |
|-------------|--|----|
|             | differentiation.   | 71 |
| Figure 3.15 | Percentage of neurite-bearing cells of NS-1 in different concentration of NGF (ng/mL) after 4 days of differentiation. | 71 |
| Figure 3.16 | Percentage of neurite-bearing cells of 3 cell variants in increasing dosage of NGF after 4 days of differentiation.    | 73 |
| Figure 3.17 | Highest percentage of neurite-bearing cells of 3 cell variants after 4 days of NGF-induced differentiation.            | 73 |
| Figure 3.18 | Percentage of neurite-bearing cells after 3 and 4 days of differentiation at increasing concentrations of NGF.         | 75 |
| Figure 3.19 | Percentage of neurite-bearing cells in range of NGF concentrations (ng/mL) after 3 days of differentiation.            | 76 |
| Figure 3.20 | Percentage of viable cells determined by MTT assay after different durations of OGD.                                   | 78 |
| Figure 3.21 | Caspase 3/7 activity after different durations of OGD.   | 79 |
| Figure 3.22 | Effect of 8-OH-DPAT and WAY 100635 on apoptotic NS-1 cells following OGD.  | 80 |

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| ADP             | adenosine diphosphate                  |
| ATCC            | American type culture collection       |
| ATP             | adenosine triphosphate                 |
| BD              | Becton Dickinson                       |
| BSA             | bovine serum albumin                   |
| CO <sub>2</sub> | carbon dioxide                         |
| DMEM            | Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium       |
| DMSO            | dimethyl sulfoxide                     |
| ECM             | extracellular matrix                   |
| ERK1/2          | extracellular signal-regulated kinases |
| FBS             | fetal bovine serum                     |
| F-12K           | Ham's F-12K (Kaighn's) Medium          |
| HBSS            | Hank's balanced salt solution          |
| HCL             | hydrochloric acid                      |
| HS              | horse serum                            |
| 5-HT1A          | 5-hydroxytryptamine 1A receptors       |
| mg              | milligram                              |

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| mL        | mililitre  |
| mM        | milimolar  |
| MTT       | 3-[4,5-dimethylthiazole-2-yl]-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium<br>bromide |
| ng        | nanogram   |
| NGF       | nerve growth factor  |
| NIH       | National Institutes of Health                                    |
| nM        | nanomolar  |
| NS-1      | Neuroscreen-1  |
| OGD       | oxygen glucose deprivation                                       |
| OGD/R     | oxygen glucose deprivation/reperfusion                           |
| 8-OH-DPAT | 8-hydroxy-2(di-n-propylamino) tetralin                           |
| PBS       | phosphate buffered saline  |
| PC        | pheochromocytoma   |
| rpm       | rotation per minute  |
| RPMI      | Roswell Park Memorial Institute                                  |
| RTKs      | receptor tyrosine kinase   |
| SD        | standard deviation   |

|     |                  |
|-----|------------------|
| Trk | tyrosine kinases |
| μL  | microlitre       |
| μg  | microgram        |
| μM  | micromolar       |
| %   | percentage       |
| °C  | degree Celcius   |

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **1.1 Stroke**

Stroke is the second commonest cause of death worldwide (Katan & Luft, 2018). Its global burden is high, inclusive of increasing mortality, incidence, disability-adjusted life year and economic impact, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Mukherjee & Patil, 2011). It can cause cognitive and functional disabilities, contributing significantly to long term health care costs (Azad, Veeravagu, & Steinberg, 2016). In Malaysia, stroke is the third leading causes of death (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2018). The incidence of local ischaemic stroke is on the trend of rising annually by 29.5% (Lee, Shafie, Sidek & Aziz, 2017). The prevalence of stroke was reported as 0.7%, with 1.7% among those aged 55-59 years, 2% in 60-64 years, 3% in 65-69 years, 3.5% in 70-74 years and 7.8% in 75 years and beyond in the fourth National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) in 2011 (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2011). Prognosis of the disease depends on many factors including age, stroke severity, infarct location, stroke mechanism, clinical findings and related complications. In addition, medical interventions for example thrombolysis, thrombectomy, stroke unit care, and rehabilitation influences the outcome of the disease.

##### **1.1.1 Pathogenesis of Stroke**

Stroke are caused by ischaemia (loss of blood supply) or haemorrhage (bleeding). Around 80% of stroke are caused by ischaemia. The most common ischaemic strokes include